

HELPS

FOR

THOUGHT AND ACTION.

Addressed to the Young.

BY REV. A. THOMSON,

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER,

CUMBERLAND, N. S.

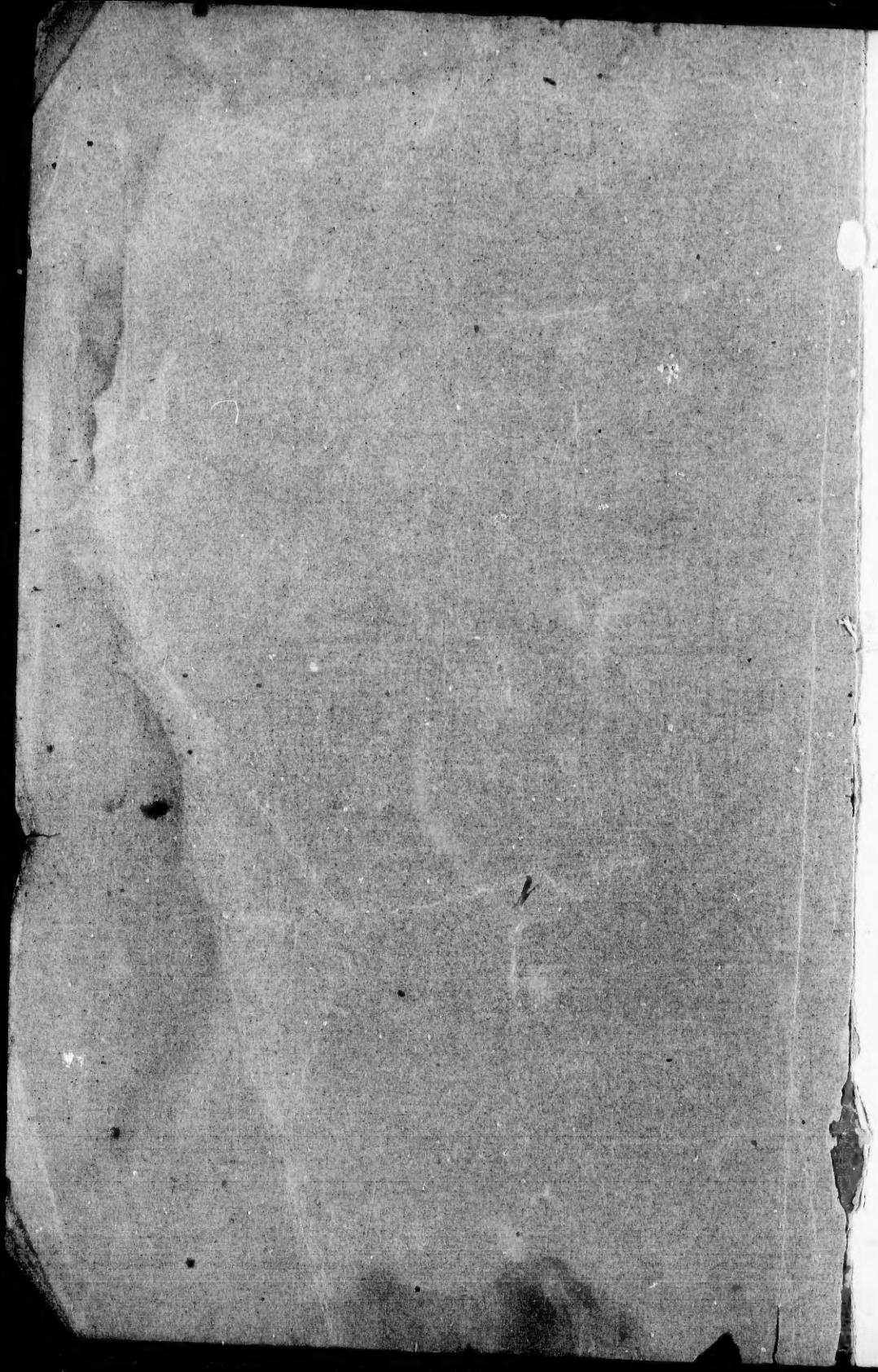
"If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work on brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work on immortal minds—if we imbue them with principles, with the fear of God and love of our fellow-men—~~we engrave~~ on these tablets something that will brighten for all eternity."—PLAISTER.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

AMHERST, N. S.

"AMHERST GAZETTE" OFFICE.

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COURTEOUS READER,—It is proper that I inform you concerning the *origin* and *design* of the Letters now in your hand. They were produced during the Autumn of 1869, amid the labors of an extensive pastorate, and published in the *Amherst Gazette* of said year in regular weekly succession. They originated in the thought that letters such as are to be found in this pamphlet would be of some use to guide the youthful mind. Having received multiplied proofs of their usefulness, and wishing them to continue in their mission of beneficence, at the solicitation of friends whose opinions I value highly, I now present them to you in their present form. We have travelled over a wide and fruitful field, although we have been able to gather but a few flowers to adorn the brow of simple truth.

Reader :—do not look in these letters for lofty flights of the imagination, or curious disquisitions in mental or moral philosophy; but “read, learn, and inwardly digest,” and I have no doubt but you will find much to aid you in the pathway of life. Examine every letter in the light of Experience, Reason, and Revelation. I ask for them a candid perusal. Do not cast them aside because of their homeliness of manner and matter. And now, permit my manifold labors and limited time to be *my excuse* for their want of greater fulness, and *their defence*, also, from unkind criticism.

Heartily invoking the Divine Blessing to rest on this little Tractate, I give to the Only Wise God, through Jesus Christ, all the glory.

A. THOMSON.

AMHERST, January, 1870.

HELPS FOR THOUGHT AND ACTION.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—In the statements I purpose to lay before you I sincerely intend your welfare both for time and eternity. I am not one of those ascetic philosophers who can listen to no sweeter music than the muffled drum, or look upon no brighter banner than a “death’s head and cross bones.” With the “man delights not me, no, nor woman either, faith” we have no sympathy, and remarkably little patience with its professors. We can see both in Nature and Providence the finest provision made for our happiness and improvement. What are the sublime and beautiful in creation but the footprints of the Almighty?—the flowers that bloom on earth are the smiles of Him who gemmed the heavens with stars; and the voices of history, as they are wafted down the long corridors of time, are the echoes of the footfall of Him whose paths drop down fatness on us. In forming our judgments of the things we examine, or see around us, we are educating ourselves, and, it may be, are receiving, at the same time, impressions as lasting as the throne of God. We must be very careful, therefore, to judge correctly, and to estimate things at their proper value. We must not, by any means, allow feeling to warp our judgment; for if we do, we may become poor, moping sentimentalists; and these, you know, seldom clothe the naked, feed the hungry, or point time’s traveller to the haven of rest. Gird up the loins of your minds, and let us reason together of the following important matters. And first:—let us talk of *Time*. What is time? It is something distinct from eternity. It is a fixed standard whereby we measure the speed or duration of things as they pass. We are in the habit of speaking of Time’s ceaseless flight; but the language is figurative, for it is ourselves, in the august company of the uncomprehended, that drift or drive, or, it may be, that are driven. Time is like a wall of glass stretching along the whole pathway of life, reflecting the forms of men and things as they slowly move, calmly roll, or wildly dash along in one continuous wave. Time to us is all-important. And whether brightness or darkness may encircle the image which each of us must throw into that transparency depends, under God, very much upon ourselves. To spend time well we must be industrious in our several callings. There is, indeed, a dignity in useful labor of any kind. One sweat drop from the brow of a man engaged in an honorable occupation is intrinsically worth more than all the gems that ever shone in the crown of royalty or on the breast of beauty. But to spend time well, we must be guided in all things by the unerring Word. The Bible, though dewy with the precious promises, and redolent with the love

of Jesus, is also our heaven appointed chart over the troubled sea of life. We must ever remember that time with fleet foot is speeding onward; and that age, with his crown of hoar frost, is tottering on time's track, yea, even now, against the walls of life's citadel is thundering the artillery of death.

Time is our inheritance; but we must use it well, for it flies on the bright pinions of the morning, and the black wing of midnight speeds it on its viewless path. Diligently and prayerfully let us use it in works of "mercy or of skill," for the past is irrecoverably gone from us, as much so as the first rays of the first sun, that, diamond like, shone on the black brow of darkness, and swaddled infant Time in the gemmed robes of light. In a word, if we use our time aright in youth, and God should spare us till old age, we shall flourish like the palm tree, yea, we "shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," so that, when the "vital spark" is about to bid farewell to mortal coil, true religion with uplifted hand will point the way to heaven.

But now, in the second place, let us talk together, for a little, of *Health*. This, whether physical or mental, is certainly of the utmost importance. It enables a man to bear up under a load of grief or care. It lights up the toil bedimmed eye, lends wings to the weary feet, and wonderfully brightens every joy.

In the constitution of health there are many elements. We will notice only some of the most prominent. The first is *cheerfulness*. So far as we can see, christianity has forged no chain to bind morality to misery. The christian has the best right to be cheerful, for God is his Father, the Lord Jesus is his Saviour, the Holy Spirit is his Comforter, and Heaven, with its "eternal weight of glory," is his expected home.

Cheerfulness is a duty we owe to ourselves and to all that come within the circle of our influence. I have often wondered at the apparent moroseness of many. Part of the cause may be in the individual's peculiar temperament; but not a little of it is to be traced to the reading of the sensational trash that is flooding our country at every point. The darkness of the sepulchral vault, and the pent up fires of the charnel house will invigorate the physical man, and send the crimson stream through the system in high health long before it can be possible that cheerfulness can dwell where the chambers of the brain are filled with images of horror, or the mind's ear is attuned to the wild shriek of agony or the low wailings of despair. Let us beware, therefore, of the sensational literature of the present day.

Another element of health is *sobriety*. It was Horace, I think, that prayed for "sana mens in sanò corpore"—a sound mind in a healthful body. Those who have a liking for intoxicating drinks may dispute or assail my position; but I have made it deliberately. The happiness of the drunkard is extremely ephemeral. How can the inebriate be happy when he sleeps, as it were, upon the top of a mast, and the seething gulf below is waiting to receive him? Intemperance is a river of death—moral, mental, and physical. The health of the drunkard cannot continue though he was fenced with iron. To aid in

the maintenance of good health, and in the production of a cheerful spirit, we must avoid every appearance of evil, employ some of our time in examining, as far as we can, the arena of nature, peruse the lives of the "world's grey fathers," keep a firm curb on every factitious appetite, and, as man is emphatically a social being, let us see to it that our companions are those that fear the Lord and walk in his ways. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

LETTER II.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—Our sincere desire is to do you good. To promote this somewhat let us have some talk about our *companions*. Perhaps nothing else so contributes to our happiness and usefulness as the fellowship of suitable companions. Man is emphatically a social being. The social affinities of our nature are evidenced in the family circle, the neighboring compacts, the commercial city, and the great nations of the earth. It is a libel on our race to assert, as Hobbes has done, that man, in all respects, is a selfish being. A desire to associate with our fellow beings is, by all good philosophers, allowed to be a primary principle of our nature. The highest authority has said "It is not good that the man should be alone." But, whilst in seeking society we develope a principle of our nature, we also incur the heaviest responsibilities. We must, therefore, be exceedingly careful in the formation of our friendships, lest in after days we may be filled with regrets; for although sympathy of nature, community of wants, and similarity of desire are the silken cords that bind men together, yet it must be apparent to all that, from the constant friction of mind upon mind and of habit upon character, the most sensible and permanent impressions for good or evil will be made.

I will now give you three reasons why our companions should be good; *i. e.*, intelligent, moral, and christian. In the *first place*: such companions contribute largely to our temporal happiness. Of course our happiness, under God, depends very much upon ourselves. Simple greatness, elevated station, and imperial pomp seldom promote it. We know well that often beneath the purple of empire, and the crown of royalty there are concealed many bleeding, broken hearts. In the fellowship of the virtuous we are taught to be prudent, punctual, and persevering; and we are encouraged also to cultivate the graces of meekness, justice, goodness, and truth. In the *second place*: good companions assist to develope our mental powers. God Himself informs us that, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." This is true beyond the possibility of reasonable contradiction. Every intelligent man knows well, that the effect of mind acting upon, or in concert with, mind is to mature the judgment, refine the taste, and to create an appetite for the beautiful, the good, and the true.

But in the *third place*: success in the affairs of life is promoted by the influence of good associates. "He that walketh with wise men

shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." Although I would counsel you to cultivate a spirit of self-reliance, to trust to your own energies and to lean upon no man, yet the offices of the wise and good may materially assist you to places of honor and of profit.

But before we finish this chapter let me turn your attention to the subject of *ignorance*. This term is comparative: for the amount of knowledge that would make an intelligent peasant would make but a very indifferent peer. The evils of ignorance are very manifest and varied. Its pathway is ever dark, ever downward, tending to destruction and the grave. It yokes remorseless cruelty to the same car with that blood and fire-nurtured monster superstition, and drives the fiend-begotten pair over a sin smitten world. It carpets the earth with all the horrors of a Scandinavian heaven, and condenses the most diabolical passions that ever raged or rankled in the breast of unregenerate man. To exhibit some of the evils of ignorance let me draw for you a picture. There rides a ship to windward of a rock-bound coast. Between her and the land a rugged reef is roaring, and the dashing surge, torn into foam, is rising like a wall between her and that shore of death. Knowledge might carry her seaward yet, but ignorance keeps her sails handed and her anchor down. Hark, the ocean spirit moves. The breeze increases to a gale. The noble, but fated ship, impelled by wind and sea, leaps at and drags her anchor, and surges sternward to destruction. The well made chain is snapped—the ocean lifts her in his arms of foam and hurls her on the reef. Her beams and timbers are groaning, whilst the coral axe is splintering keelson and keel: her masts and spars are on the brine, her torn planks whirling in the raging surf, and corpses mounted on the white mained billows, in unconscious rivalry, are riding and racing to that shore. Now, we ask, as we look at this sad picture, what produced all this? Your answer, no doubt, is ready. It was *ignorance*: for under its influence many a bright hope, and many a human mind has gone to wreck and ruin, like that fated ship. In helping you to rise above, and to conquer, the evils of ignorance I have some counsels to give you:—first, be solicitous that the knowledge that you acquire is truly of the *utilitarian* character. A large amount of time is lost, in many cases, by young people, at school, attempting to learn things that can be of no benefit to them in the battle of life. If our studies have no good practical issues, our knowledge is practical ignorance, and our wisdom gilded folly. But in the second place: in attempting to acquire knowledge of ourselves, or others, we must be careful not to overwork the brain. No two human minds have the same grasp, or power of endurance. There are bounds within which the mind may profitably work, but beyond the limits of which it can never pass unscathed. Let it pass; then crushing darkness presses upon the bewildered brain; and the tortured mind, like the fire begirt scorpion, turns upon itself and stings. Thus it was with Hugh Miller—a man of no ordinary grasp of mind—a prince among his peers. But in the third place: with the

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heavens above us, on which God has stamped the evidence of his being ; with the earth beneath us, inviting us to unlock her stores ; with the Word of God before us, courting our inquiries ; and with the thousand avenues, furnished in providence, to increase our amount of knowledge ; ignorance, I say, must be almost an unpardonable sin. In a word, let us be thoroughly satisfied that ignorance, when it is vincible, should be removed. The pearls of knowledge are acquired by diligent thought and careful preparation. But by all means we must guard against the pride and vanity that are often visible in those who think they know a little. Pride of anything, but especially of knowledge, is exceedingly repulsive. The proud, conceited, talking speaker should be turned out to graze. And let us begin all things in the fear of the Lord ; thus we may go forward, remembering that the crown awaits the conqueror, and the meed of fame lies in the future. "He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread ; but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding."

LETTER III.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS :—I wish to address you at this time on the subject of *Poverty*. This may not be to some a very pleasing topic of consideration, nevertheless duty impels us to examine it, to understand its nature and work, and, if possible, to provide against its multiplied evils. Although the Divine Lawgiver has said that "the poor shall never cease out of the land," yet inexorable necessity has not so ordered it, but that mismanagement, misfortune and crime—the parents of poverty, may be guarded against, or controlled. Poverty is indeed a gigantic evil. With unremitting zeal should our full force be directed toward the demolition of every fort in which this enemy can possibly intrench itself. We may not be able altogether to banish it from the earth ; but we may, by proper precaution, avoid its fearful terminus of woe. When we examine closely the state of affairs among men we discover that earthly comforts are very unequally divided ; some seem to have considerably more than their own share, whilst some are miraculously unfortunate ; for contrary to all the laws of chance they catch nothing but jolts and tosses in the whole journey of life, and end their days where, with an ordinary prudence, they ought never to have been. In temporal things we hold no man poor who has a sufficiency of the necessities of life, and if there were none richer this earth would tell a happier tale ; for there would be more justice with less law, more religion with less hypocrisy, and more of the good things of time with less gold and silver plate. Before proceeding to illustrate our position we may observe that comfortable worldly circumstances are the foundations upon which mental and moral improvement must be built. The capability of carrying on a system of mental improvement, presupposes at least the possession of the necessities of life, for before a man can ascend in the moral scale, he must be properly lodged, clothed, and fed. Abject poverty lies like a tombstone upon the grave of self respect, mental and moral improvement.

Poverty is a *traveller*; ranging over every land, devouring the young man and the maiden, the mother and the child; blasting the hope of nations, and consuming armies as if they had been breathed upon by a spirit of fire. Mountain replies to mountain, with his wolf like howlings, hill and dale take up the echo, and fling it back on the winds of ocean, to be returned by the hunger stricken wanderers o'er the deep. In all ages he has carried havoc into the ranks of men, and paved the earth, like the hall of Valhalla, with human skulls. In his terrible presence crimson war turns pale, and the sweeping pestilence stands aghast.

Poverty is half soldier, half assassin,—a more remorseless never shouldered a rifle, or sheathed a dagger in his neighbor's back. From no brazen bugle sounds the wild charge; no mounted squadrons dash o'er the battle-field, swift and bright as the lightning's flash, condensed and deadly as the thunderbolt; no gleam from helmet or sword flickers upon the pale face of the dead, as if the spirit of life was striving to reanimate the blood stained clay; no storm of iron and fire rages to mock the cloud artillery of heaven.

Poverty is a terrible *leveler*. It may suit some to talk of it as an honest thing, to extol it as a lever to elevate to a higher position, and to praise it as a virtue peculiarly dear to Heaven, yet, believe me, it tends to destroy all that is noble and independent in human nature, and forces even the brave spirit that would have dared the fire and the faggot to crawl like a worm in the dust. Under its pressure, man's holiest aspirations die; it freezes the warm feeling as it gushes forth, and throws it back upon the chilled heart, cold as the sleet, like sweat upon the brow of the dying. Surely the ground, on which this enemy of human progress and comfort suffers a defeat, will be more sacred than Marathon; the conquerors more glorious than that self-devoted band who fought and fell within thy pass, Thermopylæ. That I have by no means exaggerated the fearful effect of poverty, look for a moment at the statement made in the Word of God. "They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field."

Before we finish our remarks at this time let us have a few words about *mental* poverty. To be poor in this world's goods is bad; but to be mentally poor is worse. This evil generally manifests itself in *self-conceit* and *pride*. These, like the Siamese twins, seem to be inseparable. Self-conceit manifests itself by an undue amount of consequential impudence, and by an over-weaning desire to commend what is ours. Thus it paralyzes all our efforts to do good, and makes us contemptible in the eyes of others. Blinding the understanding and perverting the judgment, it makes men the abject slaves of circumstance.

Pride, though closely allied to, is not to be confounded with self-conceit, or vanity. It is neither ornamental, nor useful. The proud man has always an inordinate self-esteem, attended with rude treatment of others. He is always vindictive, ever battling for real, or imaginary

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rights, and, at the same time, unhesitatingly trampling on the rights of others. But why should man, imperfect in nature, scanty in knowledge, contracted in power, and shorn of primeval beauty, be proud? Let pride look at a man dying with cancer in the face. Let it contemplate a corpse that has lain unburied for a month, and go and hide its head in that festering mass.

To obtain the mastery over poverty of every kind we encourage you, young friends, earnestly to try. Do not be deterred by fatalism. Fatalism is a paralyzing lie. It froze the Turkish blood under a burning sun and laid the energy of the fiery Persian cold and lifeless in the dust. Hope on--hope ever. Hope even against hope. Believe ever, that, though the fair form of hope may be eclipsed sometimes by the foul shadow of despair, yet behind that fearful veil it shines in glory. Give your hope a tangible form, clothe it with flesh, pour warm blood into the incarnation, and regard it as a living thing, to be grasped, to be woed, to be won.—And above all remember, whilst you try to scale "Ambition's diamond ridge," that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." With all thy gettings get wisdom, for "She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—In this letter I wish to say something to you about *Education*. The definitions that have been given of man are various. He has been spoken of as a "cooking animal;" because he alone, of all the animals on the earth, cooks his food: some have thought proper to denominate him a "laughing animal," because he alone possesses risible faculties: and others, appreciating his high origin and immortal destiny, prefer to call him a *thinking, rational, and responsible* being. As a being possessing intellectual and moral powers, it is perfectly plain, that he is influenced in no small degree by example, instruction, and education. Example, in its quiet majesty, is resistless as the flow of ocean—mightier far than all the eloquence that ever burst from tongue, or flowed from pen. Its effects are as lasting as the throne of God. Instruction, or the building in process, is of the utmost importance and power. It is morally certain, that according to the principles implanted, or truths indoctrinated, will be the future career of the rising generation.

Education, literally considered, is nothing more than the development of those principles or truths. If, in a just system of education, it is contemplated to enlighten the understanding, to correct the temper, to form the manners and habits of youth, and thus to fit them for future usefulness in the world, then our training institutes, measures, and managers should reflect the true glory of Education's sun.

In treating of this matter I use the term in its broad and fullest sense. And here let me say to you, that I cannot regard any system of education as perfect, that does not contemplate the useful training of head, heart, and hand. The instruction that crucifies reason,

enthrones selfishness in the heart, pours thick darkness into the bright eyes of science, and bewilders the mind with the shadowy forms of mysticism, throws the living spirit of man as an offering to the foul fiend, Superstition. In educating ourselves, or others, we must look truth firmly in the face, although her gaze should blind us, and she should scatter long cherished opinions like spray before the spirit of the storm. Education has done much for our world, is still doing much, and still has much to do.—It is sweeping from among us many of those wrecks that have drifted down the sea of time. It is dashing error from its bloodless path; and causing the temples of ignorance to heave and surge like a sea, or city earthquake tossed. Believing that you, young men, are, in some respects, more valuable than the middle-aged, or the old, we are solicitous to help you in the path and work of self-improvement. The first thing we should aim at, in our education, is the power of self-government. To govern nations well, or to reign righteously in senate halls, is indeed worthy of high commendation; but often, it is found, that governments reflect the crimson tinge of blood, and the dark hue of injustice and oppression. Self-control lies at the foundation of our success in life. Upon its pure brow the light of heaven falls and leaves no stain. If this kind of government were universal, prisons would melt like a northern iceberg as it drifts into a southern sea; the scaffold and the penal colony would disappear, and leave no trace; the angel of mercy would sing a requiem to the cannon's roar; and the blessings of peace would be realized, "far as the eagle's pinion or dove's light wing can soar." Begin the art of self-government. Youth is the most appropriate time, yet, even in old age it is pleasant, though it should be like an autumn flower flinging its fragrance through the stanchions of a tomb. A peevish, suspicious, irritable old man is a pitiable specimen of humanity; and yet he arrived at his contemptible significance by degrees. To avoid the contempt that is justly poured on such a character, you must, by all means, command your tempers. A passionate man has far more enemies than he is aware of; the bitter, biting words that escape from him, almost unconsciously, fade from his own memory; but they burn like fire in the bosom of him to whom they were addressed.

Revenge is another black spot on nature's robe. It is the twin brother of rage, and springs from the same infernal parent—pride. It shows itself in many a form. We see it in the child, as well as in the despot who rides over a ruined land, heralded by blood and fire. A revengeful person is unworthy of the name of man. Give the passion no quarter; crush it; it is wicked and cowardly. Another thing about which you must ever have a deep concern is *Economy*. Frugality is a source of power. There is an independence and virtue about the frugal, which is wanting in the improvident. No man can be long great or powerful without it. It is one of the foundations on which society safely rests. It creates science and art, and frames all that tends to please, to purify, and to adorn. I would not by any means, have you to idolize money; but yet I would have you to be

economical. Money, or its equivalent, tends to soothe the sick bed, it pillows the dying man, and lays him decently in the grave. By it the orphan's cry has been stilled, the widow's tears dried up, and the end of life's pathway robbed of many of its sorrows. Educate yourselves then, young men, to habits of economy; for rest assured that old age will come upon you with all its attendant wants; and woe betide the man who has nothing to purchase the sympathies of his fellow creatures.

But remember that your education is very incomplete if it does not produce within you a profound reverence for things sacred. A blaspheming old man is bad—a curse to society; but a profane young man is something so bad as almost to defy description. This vice, alas, is very common—so common, that laws, made and provided for it, have, in our parts, become a dead letter. The young man who profanely uses any of the names, or attributes of the Most High, shows great disrespect to his parents, insults christian society, and proscribes himself. Avoid the companionship of the profane, as you would that of the pestilence stricken dead.

In your manners be plain and courteous. Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Suppress all outward signs of anger and of rage. Turn not from truth, although it may appear rugged and stern; rush not into the arms of a lie, though it may seem a place of refuge for the time; for it will yet cast you forth, dishonored and polluted, to the world's scorn; cultivate a spirit of self-reliance, and go forward, realizing that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.”

LETTER V.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—I intend at this time to call your attention to the subject of *Amusements*. That there is a necessity for amusement of some kind I have no doubt. Man is a complex being. His body and his mind both, in order to maintain strength and usefulness, require occasional relaxation. But as amusements, ethically considered, may be either virtuous or vicious, great care must be taken to realize those that enoble the intellect, add tension and strength to the relaxed sinews, and increase every rational pleasure. No man should indulge in those that unduly excite the mind, or that sweep like a simoom of desolation over fair prospects and professions. It sometimes happens that the needed recuperation is obtained by simply changing the scene of labor or business.

Gardening, cricket, swimming, rowing, and such like exercises often tend to produce the most beneficial effects on both mind and body. But, on the other hand, we think that theatrical performances, gambling, horse racing, promiscuous dancing, and such like tend to demoralize: for they waste time, corrupt the morals, unfit for duty, and plant life's pathway with many sorrows.

I am well aware that some of you will not look at these things just as I do; and you may feel disposed to exclaim:—It is time enough

to warn us when you see us in danger. I do see the danger, although, indeed, you may not now perceive it. It is the very nature and art of vice to appear in the fairest possible form. Now as the ship is built upon the beach, ere she is launched forth to brave the ocean spirit, so would I desire to help you, before you be launched, as it were, upon the sea of life.

Of the many things that come to us with garlands of roses about their brows, and professions of love upon their tongue, let us examine the following:—the Theatre, Ball Room, and Gambling. With regard to the *origin* of theatrical performances we can say but little. They obtained in ancient, as well as modern times. But although occupying a front rank among popular amusements, they scarcely deserve the name; especially if that old beldame, Tragedy, be mounted on her stilts. The young man that delights in tragic representations cannot be a person of ordinary humanity. The monster spirit of Nero must be strong within him; for it is utterly impossible for a healthy, happy mind to delight in a banquet of blood and misery. The theatre has been defended on the ground that it is a school of morals. Thus, too, has the slave trade been defended. But both have tended to blunt the public sensibility, to harden the heart, and to close the ear against the sighs and sobs of real affliction. Many young people have attended the theatre until every nerve of the throbbing brain was twanging like the string of an over-bent bow; but their judgments have remained uninformed, their intellects unimproved, their chafed spirits unsoothed, and their consciences searcd as with an hot iron. If it be true that nothing is truly great that is not truly good, then the theatre and all of its class stand condemned; for its effects, both upon mind and body, have been, and are of the most pernicious character. Shakespeare, with almost super-human intellect, has done more to render the stage attractive, than any other man, living or dead. The “air drawn dagger” which led Macbeth to Duncan, the voice crying, “Sleep no more; Glammis has murdered sleep;” the old king’s “silver skin, laced with his golden blood;” and the spirit of murdered Banquo shaking his gory locks in the old king’s face, surround us with an atmosphere pregnant with disease to both mind and body. But, young friends, if you wish to behold scenic representations, go to the Theatre that God has built; look upon the vast national tragedies of the day; contemplate the great dramatic throng of life that is bustling onward to fame or ruin; and listen to the mighty swell of music as it flows from Heaven’s own orchestra; but turn not to the gas lit hole where drunken ranters hold high holiday.

Examine with me now, if you please, the matter of *dancing*. The dance as to its origin is of a very early date; and, so far as I can gather from recorded testimony, it is either religious, or the opposite. With the truly *religious* dance I have nothing to do at present. My plan calls me to contemplate the nature and effects of what is known by the name of *promiscuous* dancing. I can imagine the possibility of a few young people of the same household, “tripping it on the light

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"fantastic toe," without doing much injury to mind, morals, or body. But in the promiscuous gathering I see envy perched upon the brow; and I know that jealousy and deceit rankle in the heart. I anticipate, however, that some of you may exclaim, O, he forgets that Solomon says, that "there is a time to dance." So he does; but he does not fix the precise time. We must therefore ascertain it for ourselves; for certainly it would be very indecorous to do it at the wrong time. How would it do on the Sabbath day, or before a Communion feast, or when the pestilence stalks abroad at noonday? By all means be careful to fix the proper time before you commence the exercise, and remember that, while you whirl in the giddy dance, you will find splendor without lasting enjoyment; professions of friendship without sincerity; smiles when the heart is full of envy; and momentary bliss to be succeeded by nights of sorrow and anguish.

We have yet to speak a word or two of *gambling*. Of this, perhaps, the most common kind is card playing. Statesmen, merchants, and even ministers of religion are not ashamed to own, and practise it. It should therefore stand on something like holy ground, and be of noble origin. But what is the fact? It is notorious that cards were invented to amuse an *idiot* king of France. I will not say that idiocy is characteristic of the whole tribe of card players; but this I will affirm, that it undermines the health, wastes precious time, blunts the intellect, sears the conscience, and surely leads to a terminus of ruin. My young friends, avoid these things as you would the proffered cup of poison. A card playing young man is a sorry sight indeed; but a card playing young lady is the sorriest of all. Every grace that tends to ennable her fair form will soon be transfixed on the sharp cliffs of cold hearted indifference. "Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—I write to you at this time on the subject of *Temperance*. It is one that lies at the foundation of your peace, prosperity, and usefulness in the world. Temperance is reckoned by moral philosophers as one of the four Cardinal Virtues. It very deservedly occupies a prominent place in christian ethics, and, in its great and growing importance, demands the serious attention of all right-thinking statesmen and philanthropists. In discussing this matter we will endeavor to use great plainness of speech; for, in an affair that affects the character, usefulness, and immortal destiny of man, we have no disposition to bedizen the sacred form of simple truth with tinselry or artificial flower, or to palm upon your judgments glitter for gold. When we see, as we do every day, men undermining their health, beclouding their reason, corrupting their morals, inflaming their passions, and posting rapidly to a death of infamy and crime, we very naturally ask the cause, and anxiously enquire whether or not we can find a remedy. I believe that a large proportion of the crime committed, and for which men and women are immured in the peniten-

tiaries of the world, may be traced to Intemperance as the cause ; and the remedy for this, under God, is patent to all the world, and consists in Total Abstinence.

By Total Abstinence I mean the act or practice of voluntarily refraining from the use of fermented liquors, except for mechanical, medicinal, or sacramental purposes. On the truth contained in this definition of temperance, as a basis, I am willing and prepared to appear in its defence. I am not now going to discuss with you the right of free thought and action in the premises, any farther than to remind you that man has a right to free thought and action, but not to the injury of himself or his fellow creatures. Prudence, or a just regard to our own good upon the whole, should induce us carefully to examine the claims of temperance. And prudence in the management of public affairs should lead political economists to give this matter more than a passing thought ; but Dame Rumor often tells us that statesmen, so called, and ministerial publicists, are frequently so affected by intoxicating stimulants that they are often drunk or incapable. From such, therefore, we cannot hope for an exposition of the principles or benefits of temperance, except in so far as they illustrate the supremacy of evil habits. To protect ourselves from the insidious example of wine-bibbers, and the pestilent practices that so much subvert the best interests of society, we must be thoroughly prepared to treat them with an emphatic negative. Armed with this talisman we may fearlessly take the field. It will protect head, hand, and heel ; and, like Fitz James' blade, answer the double purpose of sword and shield. Intemperance is the parent of vice, and saps the foundations of a nation's honor as really as it cuts the sinews of its strength, and makes it a coward in the day of battle. Classic Greece, Imperial Rome, mighty Babylon, and many other of the nations of antiquity, crumbled into the dust, because of their pride, luxury, and intemperance. Suppose every man, in any given community, claims and exercises his right to drink, until reason is dethroned, and all the evil passions of unregenerate humanity riot in wild confusion, would not such a community be a Bedlam on a grand scale, yea, even debauchery gone to seed ? I hold, therefore, that every drunkard is a criminal at the bar of reason, of decency, and of God. He is not only a moral blot on the body politic, but he is a positive curse in whatever place he drawls out his miserable existence. It is the positive duty of every man to contribute something to adorn and bless society ; but the poor inebriate fritters away his time, wastes all his talents, and so, with a darkening downward career, he plants with many thorns his dying pillow. Believing that a tree is known by its fruit, and that the fruits of intemperance are evil, and that continually, I wish to set before you the following facts, so that, as a just jury, you may join issue with me in trying the panel at the bar.

First : Intemperance is a great *waster*. Time, whose waves carry us forward to the shores of an eternal world, is frittered ; health, without which wealth and honor are as nothing, is undermined ; property, of which man at best is but a steward, is squandered ; and the mind—the

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Second: Intemperance forms *but alliances*. Birds of a feather flock together. The habit of drinking partakes of the social character, and thus it fosters a custom at once degrading to both head and heart; for it brings a man into the fellowship of the immoral, and conducts to an untimely, dishonored grave, as steadily as the poised and free magnetic needle does to the north.

Third: Intemperance is very *consequential*. With brazen face it has sometimes perched itself even in the pulpit; showed its hydra head on the magisterial bench; swept its foul breath through the dwelling places of man; and rode roughshod over the claims of mercy and the fairest prospects.

Fourth: Intemperance is a *gigantic evil*. As a city missionary I have had ample opportunities of contemplating the results of this upas tree. Nearly nine-tenths of all the prisoners in the great jail of Glasgow were there, either directly or indirectly, because of the power and prevalence of strong drink. It provides subjects to garnish that terrible instrument of justice—the gibbet—and sends forth its swarms to the hulks and to the penal colony.

Fifth: Intemperance is no *respecter of persons*. If its evils were confined solely to the male portion of the human race there might be found in it some redeeming feature; but, alas, it has invaded the ranks of the fair sex, and brought many of them low, even to the dust. O what a melancholy sight! to behold a woman, once of the fairest form, the light of joy sparkling in her eyes, and the grace of beauty radiant in her stately steppings, pass through life a votary to strong drink, descending gradually in the mental, moral, and physical scale, till she sinks into a premature grave, dishonored and unlamented. But if the evils of time were the only ones that grow upon this tree of death we might feel less concern. It has a fearful bearing on *eternal interests*, and, therefore, taking it for granted that you believe in a future state, I ask—what is the poor drunkard's future prospect? To heaven the path of intemperance never leads. He that judges righteously has said, “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

These are some of the evils of inebriation; but these point out as clearly as if written by a sunbeam, that temperance is a good cause, calculated to honor God, and to pour showers of blessings on humanity. Ministers of Religion, long have you wept over this sore evil, as you saw it sweeping away, as by a pestilence, some of the most promising of your flock. Help the laborers in the temperance field, and thousands yet unborn will rise up to call you blessed. Members of the church, you are now rejoicing in the hope of a glorious immortality; but do not, I beseech you, assist those that bind the fatal chain around the head and heart of wine's votary. Young men, I say unto you, arise in the might of your conscious manhood, and contend against this evil till the pean of victory is sung in every place. Go forward, and if you should have to bite the dust, it is in a noble cause. Press on; for by consist-

ent, persistent, and christian effort, soon the melancholy minors that now mar earth's melodies will cease, and the hosannas of an enfranchised race be heard in every land. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—In Letter No 4 I incidentally called your attention to the principle and duty of economy. Reflection has led me to conclude that I may possibly do you much good by an amplification of the subject. What is economy? It comes from two Greek words which signify "the law or rule of the house;" and thus it comes, very naturally, to mean the management of domestic affairs generally. A frugal management of our concerns should never, for a moment, be confounded with parsimonious meanness. The man that is judicious in the regulation of his affairs is as distinct from a miser as a sane man is from a lunatic. Frugality, I maintain, lies at the foundation of a young man's morality, honor, power, usefulness, and independence in the world. Nature provides us with no ready made clothing; till of late, honors were seldom granted by royal hands; and although usefulness does not really consist in the abundance of our means, yet without means we are comparatively powerless. To meet the wants of nature, to pass through life usefully, and to have the dark descent lighted up with the presence of bright faces, we must be economical. I have lived long enough to see that the poor man is helpless and exposed. During life he is shunned and disrespected; his death is looked upon with indifference; contempt haunts him to the grave's mouth; and with indecent haste he is hurried into the narrow house with scarcely a grassy sod to mark the place of his interment. It is perfectly plain that economy is a duty required by the provisions of nature, and pregnant with positive enjoyment. The young man who has a few dollars saved is not only on the way to respectability, but he is acquiring a position also of independence and pleasure. The frugal are trusted and honored by men, and have the conscious satisfaction of knowing that as free agents they can move about, if they so will it. It is a pleasure to be free. It is a noble privilege to be independent; and free from the fear of want, blessed with the fruits of prudence, we can afford to laugh at the smiles, or frowns of the world.

I will now give you some reasons why you should be economical. It is a great *preventive* of crime. A great part of the criminality of this, and of other lands, can be traced to indolence and improvidence. I do not present frugality as a sovereign panacea for all the ills of human life; but this I say, that the industrious generally appreciate the value of time, property, and character, and are, therefore, seldom found in the company of the immoral. Self-preservation requires them to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But this is not all. Economy tends to *remove the evils of poverty*. These evils are as numerous as the stars of heaven, and carry havoc

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and desolation into the ranks of men. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself; the simple pass on and are punished." It may suit poets, or moon struck swains, to sing of the glories of poverty; but rest assured, that, unless the millennium, about which there have been so many false prophecies, change the nature and fitness of things, no respect will ever be showed to a ragged coat, or the shoulders that wear it. Prudence, or a just regard to our good upon the whole, will, under all ordinary circumstances, raise a man above the fear of want.

But more than this. Economy enables a man to be *useful*. Without money we are comparatively powerless; but with it, if we are so disposed, we can clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and help time's pilgrim to the haven of rest. Thus a fountain of perennial blessedness is opened, and the honorable distinction of doing good is written on the imperishable records of true glory.

Further. A proper management of your affairs *will help you in old age*. We cannot adequately estimate the chilling, soul-darkening influence of want in old age. No kind hands to smooth the pillow, no generous deeds to cheer the fainting soul; no, none; but the black wing of midnight crossing the path as the poor man sinks downward in deep waters. Be frugal, young man. It will certainly bless you now; and it may even add to you length of days, riches, and honor.

Intimately connected with economy is the idea of a Savings' Bank. This useful institution is as yet unknown among us, although its blessings are innumerable. I have long thought, although from modesty I have not before this proclaimed my opinion, that a Bank for the safe deposit of the earnings of the working man should be established in every country town in the Province. In many cases the young men of our county are thoroughly convinced of the duty and necessity of saving; but, as yet, they have no proper place in which to lay up their hard earned wages. Savings' Banks are, therefore, to economy what church buildings are to religion. They give it a local habitation and a name. In many instances they are the very life of industry and manly independence. Why then are not Savings' Banks as common as Courts of Law? They are much less expensive, and, upon the whole, quite as healthful to the body politic. Let those, therefore, who have influence, endeavor to have, at least, a Branch in our shire town, and thus they will prove themselves benefactors indeed. I am prepared to hear some old man who has accumulated a few dollars exclaim, "O, if we institute Savings' Banks we will raise our young men into too much importance; we may lose our hold upon them, and, therefore, we must veto every attempt to raise those temples of wisdom, independence, and power." This is a mistaken policy altogether; for in raising our young men in the social scale we are dealing out a death blow to emigration, and converting an otherwise useless community into a loyal and patriotic yeomanry. But, perhaps, some fine old sentimentalist may say that Savings' Banks tend to produce selfishness, and should, therefore, receive no favor. I admit that in a few cases

the charge may be true; but it is not at all a legitimate consequence in regard to the great body of depositors. The abuse of a proper principle will not justify us in casting it aside. If the objection has any force at all, it would raze to the ground every church edifice in the world; for some professing religion have become bigots; it would send the whole faculty of physicians on a voyage of discovery; for some strange things have occurred in the medical profession.

Young men, agitate this matter until your voice is heard. The first Bank, or Branch thereof, established in the village will be the commencement of a new era. Mad prodigality that destroys your power, undermines your independence, and opens one of the saddest pages in history, will be cast out as an unclean thing. Yea, you will leave behind you footprints of charity on the sands of time; for,

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of Time;
Footprints that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

"He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—I call your attention at this time to the subject of *Religion*. Do not turn away from the reading of this letter because, by some, the nature and duties of religion may be well understood. By many, however, the prescriptions and pleasures thereof are sadly perverted. It becomes us, therefore, to endeavor, not only to understand, but also to practise, the duties that are evidently incumbent upon us, in our several places and relations. I do not wish, in treating of this all-important matter, to weary you with silly platitudes; but, with as much brevity as possible, in the plainest language, to exhibit religion's fair form, as she is clothed in her robes of light, and as she prescribes her laws, and distributes her benefactions to a needy race.

The christian religion I regard as a system of heaven-born, pure, and holy doctrines, together with all possible embodiment of these in consistency of life. No man can be truly religious who has not a scriptural creed; but a man may have an excellent confession, and be, nevertheless, in heart, a very Judas. Whilst, therefore, confession is like the intellect, and profession the outward form, practice is the body of religion. It is of the body, rather than of the head or outward form. I wish to speak at this time. I must take it for granted that you believe in the existence of one supreme and eternal Being. The acknowledgment of this underlies a proper understanding of either *natural* or *revealed* religion. It is the fool, only, that has said in his heart, there is no God. But whilst Nature, marshalled in her beauty, proclaims

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the eternal power and Godhead, it is Revelation, in her grandeur, that unfolds Him in the magnificence of His glory and grace. To the Word, then, we must have recourse for a complete knowledge of His character, and for our direction in duty. A late writer very justly observes that the Bible contains laws from heaven for the guidance of life on earth. But I take it for granted, also, that you accept the Bible as the Word of God. No religious man can reject it without doing violence to the laws of common sense and proper evidence. It was utterly impossible for unprincipled men to produce the Scripture. Good men would never, for a moment, endeavor to deceive the world by introducing a book as their own, whilst they knew it wholly belonged unto another. The Bible is of God. It is Heaven's encyclopedic letter to the world. By it, as it reflects the light of Jehovah's character, and points out the true character of man—as he was—as he is—and as he ought to be, our whole pathway, as it relates to God, ourselves, or our fellow-creatures, is to be regulated and adorned. Religion, undoubtedly, inculcates the duty of *prudence*. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself: the simple pass on and are punished." In this commendation of prudential management we have not only the excellency but also the nature of the virtue exhibited. It is a just regard to our own good upon the whole, and, at the same time, a powerful stimulant to direct us to labor after the maintenance of the honor, usefulness, and respectability of others. Wherever there is a community of want, there men touch each other at every point and are affected for good or evil. No man, therefore, who has a just estimate of himself, or of the fitness of things, can indulge for a moment the passions of envy, malice, or revenge. He knows full well that the effects of these recoil upon himself and blast, as with a pestilence, his own reputation, usefulness, and comfort. I do not consider it at all necessary to enumerate the various divisions of prudence as generally made by moralists. They are, upon the whole, judicious. But whatever its topical or textual arrangements may be, we must never forget that in its constitution there must be sagacity, presence of mind, and experience. Prudence is of the utmost importance. It will regulate our use of time, select our companions, fortify us against many of the evils of poverty, and deliver us from the seductions of vice. It will not suffer our religion to descend to an empty form, our zeal to become furious bigotry, or our christianity to degenerate into the dark speculations of blind superstition. Cherish this virtue. It will give you power among men; adding unto you length of days, riches and honors:

"A good man doth his favor show,
And doth to others lend:
He with discretion his affairs
Will guide unto the end."

But religion inculcates the duty of being *punctual*. Punctuality, or scrupulous exactness, as Webster defines it, is both honorable and just. It is well worthy of the consideration of all, but especially of the young. No rank, class, or condition of men can safely dispense with it, even

for a moment. It is of the utmost importance to the comfort and success of all matters—civil, sacred, or domestic. Want of this virtue is the reason why so many merchants fail in business, so many families are always in confusion, and so many young men are reaping only mortification from unsuccessful pursuits. We must endeavor to be punctual in the discharge of every duty; for we have no right to infringe on the just expectations of others; and, assuredly, want of punctuality will issue in trouble to ourselves and others. The indolent servant, the lazy school-boy, and the forgetful paymaster should immediately begin to learn lessons in this department of useful knowledge.

But how does it come to pass that any are deficient in the practice of this excellent virtue? I answer: because with many there is a want of order in the management of their affairs. Some people keep their business, like their brains, in a state of unpleasant confusion. But the cause lies chiefly in defective perception. If young men, yea, all men, clearly saw the beauty, power, and blessedness of being punctual in the discharge of their duties, the wheels of commerce would roll on more smoothly, the asperities of life would be softened down, and the true Augustan age, of peace and plenty, would be realized by earth's weary ones.

But religion directs us to the duty of *perseverance*. True, the spirit of continuance may conduct us in the path of good or evil; but, as soon as we are convinced that the way we are travelling leads to a terminus of ruin, prudence checks our steeds, and calls to circumspection. Perseverance may not remove mountains, but it will overcome great difficulties. And let it be borne in mind that the great benefactors of our race have been the silent but steady plodders in the path of duty. But for this, the mailed warriors of France would have forever trampled down the liberties of Europe; but for this, the heroic band of British soldiers at Waterloo would have been driven into the forest of Soignies; but for this, the immortal Washington would never have been called "the Father of his Country;" and but for this, few marks of industrial or moral greatness would have ever blessed the earth.

I had intended, when I commenced this letter, to have said something to you on the subject of *piety*. Piety has been defined, of old, as, "cultus deorum, et reverentia parentum," which is, freely translated, Our worship of God, and reverence for our parents. Piety leads a man to reverence the great name of Jehovah, and to avoid profanely using any of His attributes, words, or works. But it teaches us to honor our superiors in age or attainments, to deal gently with our inferiors in station, and to be christian and courteous in all the walks of life. Be prudent, be persevering, but, by all means, be pious; for it will give you a never fading crown of glory. "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her, for she is thy life."

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—In the preceding letters I have been endeavoring to point out to you some of the duties that you ought

constantly to observe and do. In this, I solicit your careful attention to some of those things you ought not to do. There are duties of a negative character as truly as there are some of a positive. We must neither overlook the one nor disparage the other. I observe, then, first of all, that you ought not, by any means, to consider yourselves above being taught. Many young people, on leaving school or college, imagine that they have finished their education. This is a serious mistake; for, if their academic or collegiate training has been of the right sort, they have only had finger-boards set up, whereby the avenues to useful knowledge have been clearly indicated. No man can finish his education. He may, by diligent study, rise to great eminence in the hemisphere of intellect; still there are oceans of truths his soaring mind has failed to grasp. Great indeed must be the amount of your information if it be beyond the possibility of increase. The great Sir Isaac Newton, of all modern philosophers the prince, affirmed, just before his death, that he was like a child gathering pebbles on the sea shore, whilst the whole ocean of truth lay unexplored before him. Never be so vain or self-conceited as to imagine that you know all things. It is related of Sir Walter Scott that he never failed to obtain useful knowledge from all, whether patrician or plebeian, with whom he conversed. Make up your mind, then, that you know but little. You do not need to proclaim this to every one; for some may laugh at, or pity you, according to their mood. Consult, in every emergency, as far as you can, the authors that will guide and bless you, without raising a blush on your cheek or a pang of mortification in your heart. But in the second place; I entreat you never to imagine for a moment that you raise yourselves by depreciating the labors or character of another. This is a very common evil among men—yea, even among those who ought to know better. In any attempt you make to pull your neighbor down, you may rest assured that you will fall with him, and perhaps be the party that is undermost. The safest and most honorable course for you to pursue, when you have to deal with persons of a malignant or suspicious disposition, is, either to treat them with contempt, or to crush them at once. I have lived long enough to see that no middle course will subserve the ends of honor, peace, or justice. But whilst I counsel you thus, concerning those immoral and unmanly characters, I beseech you so to live that even those who are intoxicated with pride and self-conceit may find no just cause of offence. Further, in the third place; do not associate with habitual appointment-breakers. They are an immoral company, and will surely do you harm. Covenant breakers may be found in every place, and their name is legion. An appointment is a voluntary engagement, and will be held sacred by every man of probity and honor. No right thinking man can, with indifference, trample on the just expectations of his fellow-men. A few minutes behind time may be of little consequence to one; but when you reflect that, in many cases, the time and opportunities of many are affected by want of exactness in fulfilling engagements as to time and place, then, indeed, the breach of promise is a serious evil. I regard

an appointment, therefore, as a solemn promise, and the breach of it as a violation of the principles of truth, honor, and justice. Keep your appointments, young men, for although it may, in the meantime, cost you much to do it, yet, in the end you will be rewarded, and men will endeavor, to some extent at least, to meet you in your own spirit. But in the fourth place: we caution you against confounding principles and opinions. Principles are eternal: opinions are as mutable as the sands on the sea shore. Neither should you blend creeds and practices. Creeds may be thoroughly orthodox, whilst the carnal exponents of them may be as far from their truth as the east is distant from the west. Many an excellent creed has been scouted, just because hypocrisy, in both its forms—simulation and dissimulation—has marked the conduct of its nominal professor. Proper principle, being either a cause or rule of action, should produce good fruit; but we conclude, sometimes, that inasmuch as many, of whom we expected better things, do wrong, therefore there is no such thing as principle to guide or direct. It is not difficult, I think, to detect the fallacy of such an argument. If bank notes were of no value, there would be no counterfeitors; if proper principle had no virtue there would be no hypocrites; and if the excellence of creeds cannot be seen in their own glorious light, apart from the improprieties of their professors, then away with them forever. But we do not conclude to melt our sovereigns because there is a counterfeit of them; neither should we confound principles and opinions, because some others, in their folly have done so.

In the last place, I counsel you to guard against a rough, rude, or domineering manner. You may rest assured that such a manner is neither profitable to you, nor pleasant to others. We have no right to treat others harshly, or in a haughty spirit. Such a spirit or conduct in an old man is contemptible; but in a young one it is altogether intolerable. A domineering manner is the result of pride and ignorance. No man who understands his own nature, and has the smallest idea of what is due to others, can for a moment practise it. I know that many are so consequential as to imagine that they are the people, and knowledge shall die with them. They speak and act, as if they would say to us, "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth, let no dog bark." Many young men seem to think it manly to be rude and boisterous; but this I can truly say, that I never knew a manly young fellow manifest either such a spirit or manner. A kind, courteous, obliging manner will wonderfully assist an aspiring youth to reach the goal of desiderated good. First of all, then, commit your way unto the Lord. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will direct your paths. Follow the honest convictions of your own consciences. Do not expose the state of your mind or feelings to any frail mortal, unless you are perfectly sure that you may obtain benefit by so doing. Fear no man, act independently, and go forward. You have but to take the right course, and to persevere therein, that success may crown your just endeavors.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—In this letter I continue to advise you concerning some of those things you should carefully avoid. And here, first, let me caution you against those human owls who recognize no smile on nature's face, no beauty in her gorgeous trappings, but view with an indifferent or stupid gaze the wonderful works of God. Without controversy that man must be blind who sees nothing admirable in the star gemmed heavens—deaf, who hears no harmony in the music of the spheres—and dead, as to fineness of sensibility, who feels no thrilling emotion within him, when he considers the origin, order, nature, and functions of the heavenly bodies. Beware of the society of those whose moral perceptions rise no higher than the green sod on which they stand, and whose creed may be summarily comprehended in the quaint, but characteristic, sentiment, “they live to eat.” Men of an Atheistic propensity would have us to believe that this earth is nothing, **that** its inhabitants are all actuated by motives of selfishness, and that we are all moving towards the same goal under the leadings of blind fatalism. We do not deny that this earth has, by sin, been shorn of much of its beauty. But believing that the very pins and clasps of nature, so to speak, manifest wisdom and benevolence, we regard the many evils that abound in the earth as so many scars that tell of its travail and sorrow. Yet, after all, the earth is not irredeemably bad. Its noble coruscations prefigure a future genesis of beauty. As much as possible, therefore, look on the bright side of everything. Such a course will tend to dignify your own nature, and to make you more assiduous in the improvement of your fellow-creatures. But farther: avoid as much as possible the Courts of Civil Law. Against the Courts and the laws of the land I have nothing at present to object; for I believe that the laws generally are good, and that the Judges upon the Bench are men of integrity, ability, and prudence—yea, men thoroughly able to illustrate their position in any part of the British Dominions. But, nevertheless, the old adage is true, that “law is law.” It has many a turn; and its issues are problematical. I have lived long enough to see that young men have, by a love for the law, dissipated some fine estates, and reduced themselves to a state of insolvency. Never go to law for trifles. In such a case, it may be said, truly, that the winner is a loser. The young man who acquires a taste for Courts of Law will soon become a pest in the place where he resides. But supposing that you are compelled to go to law, then, in such a case, I advise you to use your utmost endeavors to defend yourselves, and to obtain a righteous verdict. And let me instruct you farther, in the event of your appearance in a court of judicature, never to take counsel from an unprofessional lawyer; for an unprofessional man, whose favorite study is the law, is generally a great rogue. Consult those men who have standing in the legal profession. Tell them your case with the utmost frankness; do not plead your own cause before your lawyer; but confide to him all that you know.

for and against, and be ruled in your defence by his instructions.

Again: I entreat you to avoid all habits of indolence, extravagance, or parsimony. Indolence is almost an unpardonable sin; for the indolent lie like an incubus on the neck of industry. The indolent are generally improvident. "Go," therefore, "to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise." If thou wilt not, then rest-assured that "thy poverty shall come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." But to all this you may very possibly reply: I do not require to be industrious; for my father, or somebody else, has left me enough to meet all my wants. If it be with you really as you say, be thankful; but remember that you are still bound to occupy your talent in such a way that your life will neither be a blot nor a blank in society. In this world there is room and work for all. If, therefore, you should refuse to put forth any energy to increase your stores—physical or mental—you will certainly pass through life neglected, die disregarded, and your monumental record will be shrouded in darkness. But this is not all. Guard against extravagance in all its forms. Extravagance is dissipation. No man, young or old, has a just right to be irregular or unreasonable in the use of his property. The waster and the slothful man stand on the same level. They are brethren in crime; for, if we are morally bound to use our talents in a right way, undoubtedly we are bound not to abuse them in any way. To avoid the charges of indolence and extravagance some have become parsimonious in their habits. For parsimony I offer no excuse. It is the outcome and evidence of a small mind. No young man, who is influenced by proper principles, can be either extravagant or parsimonious. Be liberal, be just; and, whilst you gird on your harness for life's conflict, go forward in the fear of the Lord.

Finally: I warn you against the frequent and unchristian habit of fault-finding. Censoriousness, or the disposition to blame and condemn, is always bad in itself, and productive of manifold evils. A carping, fault-finding old man is a type of fallen humanity that is extremely disagreeable, but such a disposition in a young man is bad beyond description. No man with the spirit of benevolence within him can cherish or practise it, for it springs from a heart that is cruel and depraved. The malicious, envious, and revengeful person is just the immoral Atropos that cuts the thread of happiness by his dark insinuations, by his unjust reflections, and by his colored statements. Beware, therefore, of this palpable and deep-toned wickedness. Insinuation, if it be not true, is a species of moral assassination, and, in some instances, it may be more culpable than actual murder. Be generous in your views. Be charitable in your treatment of the character and conduct of others, and endeavor to live in the practice of that religion which inculcates the duty of being "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another."

In conclusion, let me appeal to you, young men. In the name of everything that is sacred I ask you to examine candidly, and to test fairly the sentiments that I have advanced in these letters. I admit

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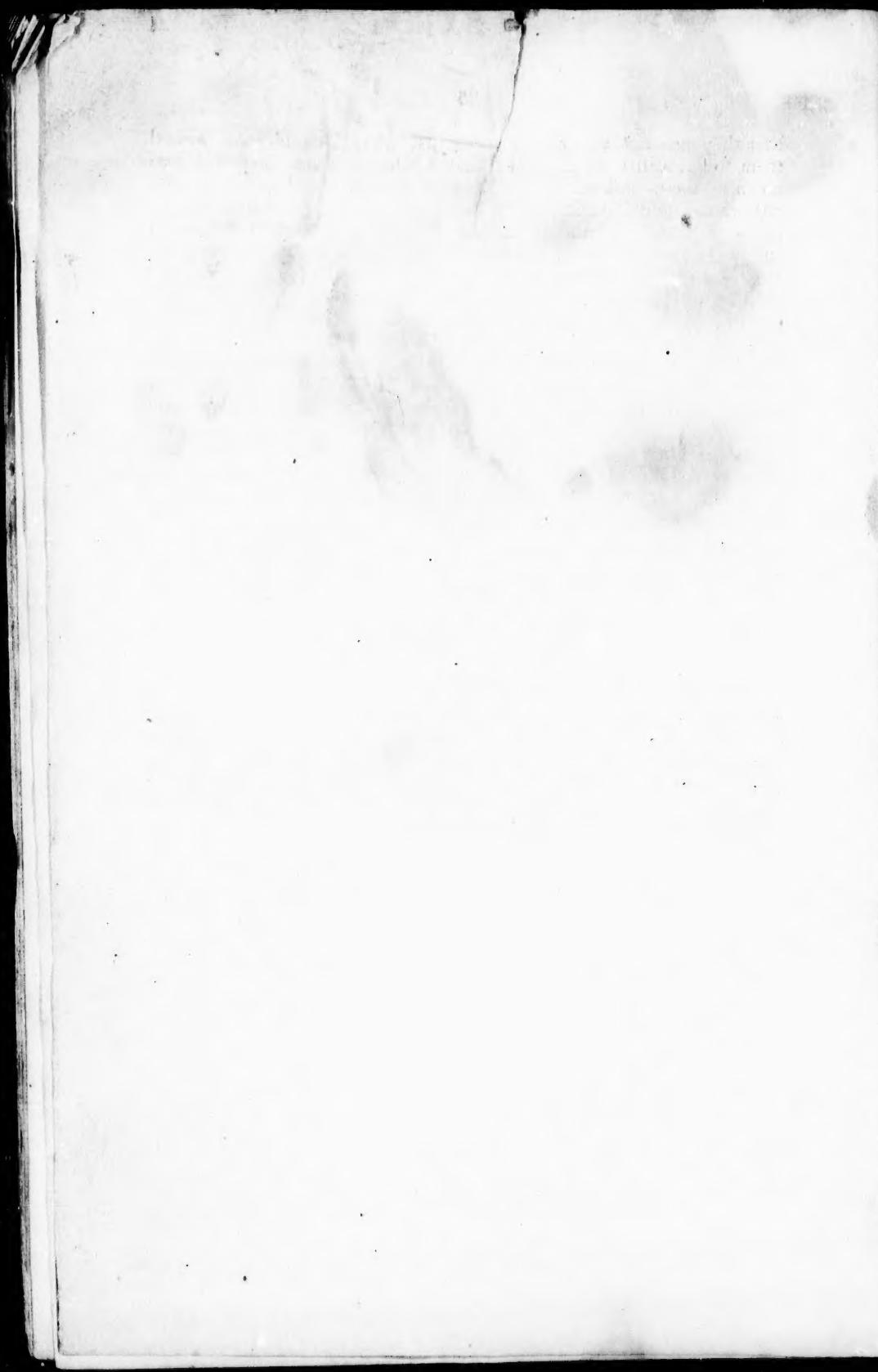
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that they are not, in every respect, just what I could have wished them to be; still I am persuaded that neither you nor they will lose much by the closest scrutiny. Examine them in the light of Reason, Experience, and Revelation. If they teach not according to the utterances of these, then cast them aside; but if they contain directions amply endorsed by them, you cannot disregard them but at your peril. I have been endeavoring, in a plain and simple way, to indicate the path of duty and of moral greatness. Yet, as nothing can be truly great or good without the Divine Blessing, I admonish you to "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Labor diligently to increase your stores of useful knowledge. Beware of the fascination of evil associations. Endeavor to elevate yourselves in the moral hemisphere of being. Be prudent in all your relationships in life, and you need not greatly fear the wave that carries you forward to the shores of an eternal world. Live in the atmosphere of truth, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and when time's sun sets in the darkening west, another and a better sun will rise upon you in an east of everlasting glory. Remember that the present is your seed time. The harvest will soon come. Work, therefore, while it is called to-day, for

"Art is long, and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."





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